



Bar Harbor 2035: A Comprehensive Plan for the Future

A Snapshot of Current Conditions

An Executive Summary of Bar Harbor's
“Where Are We Now? An Analysis of Current Conditions”
Report
October 2022





Photo by Joyce Mahone

Introduction

This Executive Summary is meant to serve as an overview of the current conditions and key findings developed for the Existing Conditions Analysis Report. The purpose of the Existing Conditions Analysis is to provide a baseline understanding of Bar Harbor as a community in 2022. The report will inform the development of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and guide the work of the Comprehensive Planning Committee, town staff, the consultant team, and the public over the next year. The report represents the first of three phases of the Comprehensive Plan writing process, and will also help the town satisfy requirements set by the State of Maine for comprehensive plans. It will become an appendix to the 2035 Comprehensive Plan.

ORGANIZATION

The Executive Summary is organized by topic, similar to the full Existing Conditions Report. Each topic includes a short summary profile that highlights information about the current conditions and emergin issues of Bar Harbor.

BACKGROUND

The Existing Conditions Report will be used to guide the consulting team that is assisting the town in developing the Comprehensive Plan and to engage the public during the public outreach planned over the coming year. It will be the main source of information used to inform discussions about the future of the community with the public to identify a clear vision and actions to work toward collectively during the next decade.

It is important to note that the information in the report represents a snapshot in time. Current conditions in any community are always in flux. Additionally, the report is not meant to be exhaustive. It explores current conditions related to aspects of community life that pertain to land use planning, future growth, and infrastructure investment. Sources for this report

include land use data provided to the town by the State of Maine, federal data, supplementary private data sources that provide additional context, interviews with town staff and other key community partners, and other relevant reports, studies, and publications that have been completed by the town or by other community entities.

CENSUS DATA EXPLANATION

For Bar Harbor's Existing Conditions Report, the consultant team used the 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey (ACS) data package to analyze demographic, household, and housing trends. At the time in the project schedule when data needed to be pulled, organized, and analyzed, it was unknown exactly when the new 2016-2020 ACS package would be available to the public as the Census experienced delays in releasing the data due to the pandemic. To maintain the project schedule and ensure the team had enough time to analyze the data and write the Existing Conditions Report, the 2015-2019 data package was used. It is worth noting that data from the 2020 Decennial Census was also unavailable except for population and housing unit counts.

The consultant team has a high level of confidence in the 2015-2019 ACS data and does not anticipate any major changes in trends if 2016-2020 ACS data were used to replace what is already in the Existing Conditions Report. The new ACS data would likely show a continuation of current trends given that the new five-year estimates would only be adding one new year to the average (2020). In Bar Harbor particularly, housing trends seen leading up to the pandemic have most likely become more acute further reflecting trends currently described in the existing conditions analysis.

Bar Harbor Today

Bar Harbor is a year-round community with more than 5,000 residents that is well known for its natural beauty, proximity to Acadia National Park, its working waterfront, and historic villages. The community is also a popular destination attracting those who own second homes and tourists visiting the community for a short-term stay. While Bar Harbor and other communities on Mount Desert Island boast many assets that make this coastal area of Maine desirable to so many people, these communities are also facing similar issues, constraints, and challenges that will require a collective lens and collaborative solutions moving forward.

Early in 2022, the topics of **housing, infrastructure investment, tourism capacity, and the balance of the seasonal and year-round economy** were identified as the top issues that Bar Harbor needs to address in the future. These priority issues were selected based on input from municipal staff, board members, and elected decision makers. They recognize that the lack of housing units and housing affordability in town is limiting who can live in the community, which impacts the composition of the community, the local economy, municipal services, and quality of life. A vibrant community is one that has housing options for a variety of people, including workers, families, seniors, low, moderate, and higher income individuals, college students, and more.

Bar Harbor is also home to a diversity of year-round employers for the Mount Desert Island region and has a bustling downtown with a variety of small businesses that serve both seasonal and year-round residents. The Town's large employers support a few thousand jobs and are important economic generators on the island. The presence of large institutions and employers like MDI Hospital, College of

the Atlantic, The Jackson Laboratory, and MDI Biological Laboratory are unique for a community of this size. Many employers and workers are struggling to find adequate housing in Bar Harbor and on Mount Desert Island, which results in long commute times, limits to the pool of employees that businesses can rely on, childcare challenges, and other issues. Seasonal workers are another population that has unique housing needs and limited existing opportunities to accommodate these needs. As the tourism season is lengthening on either end of the summer season, this will continue to be an issue unless addressed. The workforce in Bar Harbor also needs to reflect trainees that have different housing needs than college students or permanent residents.

Bar Harbor's municipal infrastructure is aging and has some capacity limitations that are in need of significant investment, particularly due to the fact that Bar Harbor receives thousands of visitors a year who are attracted to Acadia National Park. This municipal infrastructure includes transportation infrastructure, the stormwater system, and water and sewer utilities. Public facilities, such as the town's schools, are also in need of additional investment. While the tourism sector generates income (through parking and cruise ship fees) that supports municipal services, it also contributes additional costs and impacts to municipal services, such as solid waste, public safety, and water and sewer.

The tourism-based economic sector in Bar Harbor is one of the primary drivers of employment and economic activity for the town. However, tourism is growing, and with that tensions within the community are prompting questions around the level of economic impact provided, taxes paid, amount of municipal services required, and perceived transportation and infrastructure impacts. The seasonal influx of

people, particularly in Bar Harbor's downtown, creates significant vehicle and pedestrian congestion issues, traffic safety concerns at downtown intersections, and parking capacity issues. Even with a robust seasonal public transit system and well-established vanpooling and carpooling alternatives, the reliance on automobiles is overwhelming the community's roadways. Looking ahead, addressing congestion during peak tourism times through expanded pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the town, and increasing regional public transit alternatives will be critical.

However, these are not the only issues and opportunities that must be considered when planning for Bar Harbor's future. With more than 50% of its land area conserved, Bar Harbor is fortunate to have many important natural resources protected from development, but has limited options when considering where and how to accommodate future development. As Bar Harbor plans how to best manage future growth, a variety of needs and issues will need to be balanced including the capacity of infrastructure, community character, natural resource quality, housing needs of specific populations, and the finances of the community.

And yet, Bar Harbor remains a desirable place to live, work, and play for so many. Visitation is on the rise, and existing employers have many open year-round positions available. Looking forward, the community will need to grapple with big questions as it articulates a vision and direction for directing future growth. How does Bar Harbor gracefully withstand the pressures that come with being a desirable place to visit and live? How does the town sustain an equitable and livable year-round community? How does Bar Harbor best protect the assets that make our community special?

The chapters in this Existing Conditions Report that follow will further detail what is known about the community's land use pattern,

infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, economy, and other elements. They will provide the basis for dialogue about the future of the community and help the town determine how to best address these and other priority issues in the years ahead.



DEMOGRAPHICS

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

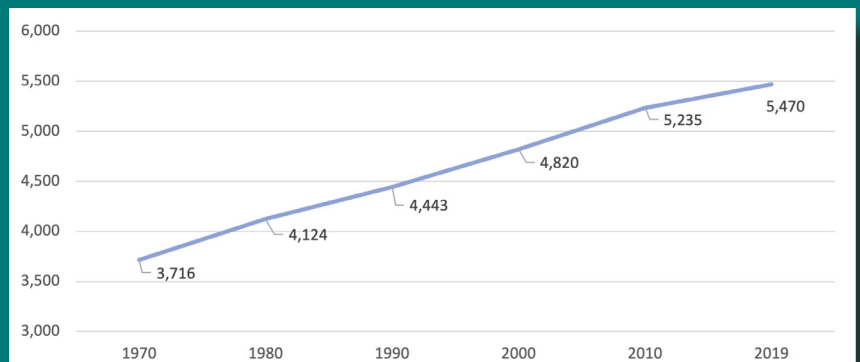
Understanding population growth and trends is essential for a community that is planning for its future to ensure that it can meet its current and future resident's needs for services and resources. Bar Harbor's population consists of a diverse range of ages, from children, working age individuals, to families, to seniors, and has a significantly high seasonal population during parts of the year.



Bar Harbor's population is increasing. The total population of Bar Harbor has been increasing each decade and reached a high in 2019 of 5,470 residents. Population projections from the Maine State Economist indicate population growth could exceed 6,300 residents by the year 2038. Between 2000 and 2019, Bar Harbor's total population increased by nearly 14% while the county increased by only 5.4%.

Bar Harbor's seasonal population is increasing. Residents residing in seasonal housing units for portions of the year may increase Bar Harbor's population by an estimated 1,844 additional residents. (note: the accuracy of this number is currently being researched by the municipality)

POPULATION OF BAR HARBOR, 1970-2019



Above: Population of Bar Harbor, 1970-2019; Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses and 2019 ACS 5-year

Residents over the age of 65 comprise 19% of Bar Harbor's total population making it the largest age cohort. This cohort also grew by 32% between 2011 and 2019. However, school district data shows declining enrollment.

There are a higher proportion of children, adolescents, and those in the 45-54 year old age bracket in Bar Harbor compared to the county.

Bar Harbor does deviate from the county when looking at age cohorts that are typically in the later portion of family formation years (ages 45-54). This group, along with children under the age of 18, comprise the next two largest age cohorts in Bar Harbor, potentially signaling increases in family households in town.

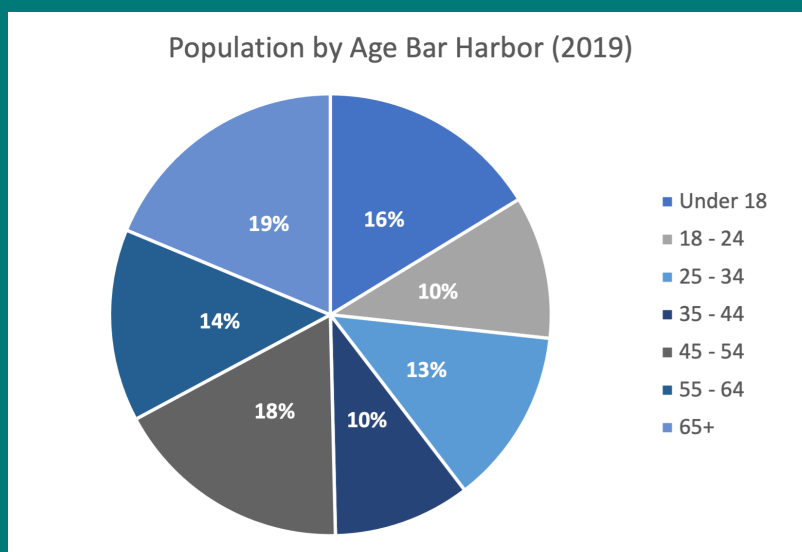
As employers in Bar Harbor look to grow, the need for more working-age residents will increase.

Supporting employment growth does require an affordable year-round housing stock which could push potential residents off the island depending on their income and availability of housing options.

Hancock County saw a net migration rate of over 50 persons per 1,000 population between 2020 and 2021 indicating relocations during the pandemic were a key piece of population change in the county.

Bar Harbor's population has high education levels. Educational attainment among Bar Harbor's residents continues to increase, evident in the higher percentages of residents with an Associates degree, Bachelor's degree, or Graduate degree.

Household income has been increasing in Bar Harbor. Between 2011 and 2019, median household income increased \$17,000 to a high of \$66,591. This was driven by large increases in households earning between \$75,000 and \$150,000 per year. The largest increase by number of households was in the income cohort earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000 a year,



Above: Population by Age, Source: 2019 ACS 5-year

Note: COA students are captured in the ACS age cohort information with other residents who are between the ages of 18-24 years old if they are present when the Census is conducted.

which grew by over 300 households or 126%. The change in household incomes by cohort between 2011 and 2019 also shows the substantial increases in households earning between \$100,000 and \$199,999. Those two categories increased by 126% and 194%, respectively.

With the rising costs of living in Bar Harbor and the changes in domestic migration from the pandemic, the town may continue to become more economically exclusive over time forcing lower wage workers and lower income households off island.

Bar Harbor has a variety of current and potential residents that have distinct housing needs including year-round residents, seasonal residents, seasonal employees, year-round employees, college students, seniors, families, and more. These residents need to be accommodated along with transient accommodations.

HOUSING

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Access to diverse, affordable, and high-quality housing options for Bar Harbor's current and prospective residents is one of the most pressing needs in the community. Availability of housing for a wide range of people is linked to economic development, community composition, and overall well-being and livability.



71% of Bar Harbor's housing stock is in single-unit structures, which have been steadily increasing. The vast majority (88%) of owner-occupied units are single-family structures with another 11% spread between one-unit attached structures and two-unit structures. There are very few alternative ownership unit typologies in Bar Harbor such as town-homes, three- or four-unit structures, or larger multi-family condominiums.

60% of households earning less than \$25,000 a year are renter-occupied while 94% of households earning over \$150,000 a year are owner-occupied. The median sale price of a home in Bar Harbor increased 67% in the past three years from \$311,500 in 2018 to \$520,000 in 2021. To afford a home at the median sale price in 2021, a person or household would have to earn over \$100,000 a year and be able to put down a 20% down payment. According to sales data from Redfin, the median home sale price of all homes in Bar Harbor increased from \$311,500 in 2018 to a \$520,000 by the end of 2021.

Between 2011 and 2019, owner-occupied housing as a percentage of the town's overall housing stock increased from 57% to 62% while renter-occupied units dropped from 43% to 38%.

The percentage of owner-occupied units increased over the last five years from 57% of units to 62% of units. The growth in owner-occupied households over the last ten years appears to be driven by two primary age cohorts – those aged 45-54 and those over the age of 65. These two age cohorts are growing in Bar Harbor and are the two largest age cohorts in terms of number of households residing in owner-occupied units.

The majority of owner-occupied households are headed by someone over the age of 55, while more renter households are headed by someone under the age of 44. This indicates that there may be challenges for younger residents to purchase a home in Bar Harbor.

The number of residents in Bar Harbor continues to increase, but the number of households is decreasing due to a rise in the average household size for owner-occupied units. The share of family households, with two or more related individuals living together, increased from 49% in 2015 to 57% in 2019. The share of single person households dropped by 5% over that period. One- and two-person households (regardless of tenure) still comprise over 67% of the town's occupied households.

As demand and competition for rental housing continues, higher income households will be able to pay higher monthly rents and out compete lower income households for units on the market. This will continue to price out low to moderate income households from Bar Harbor, particularly those residents who may be working in service-based and hospitality industries across town. Service-based industries include educators, nurses, plumbers, and other job types.

Bar Harbor's seasonal vacancy rate is 22.3%, or 762 housing units that are occupied seasonally. In 2020, the percentage of vacant and available units for rent and for sale was extremely low at 1.7%. As of the latest five-year American Community Survey (ACS) period from 2016-2020, the number of vacant units has increased to 1,230 with seasonal homes increasing by 251 units.

Bar Harbor's rental housing stock is older than its owner housing stock with 58% of all renter units built before 1980 compared to 44% for ownership units.

The number of short term rentals increased from 518 in 2019 to 750 in 2021. With the rise in short term rentals the number of listings (frequency in how often these properties become available) increased from 493 in 2015 to 5,125 in 2020.

There are opportunities to refine Bar Harbor's land use regulations to enhance flexibility of the development review process. The issues in Bar Harbor from a regulatory perspective may be less about the types of uses allowed in many districts and more about the dimensional regulations, parking, heights, and densities of residential uses.

There appear to be gaps in rental and ownership housing options for younger residents to move into, to keep growing families in town, to support employment growth, and for seniors who may be looking for a smaller housing option with less maintenance.

According to the US Census Bureau, a Census Designated Place (CDP) is a statistical geography representing closely settled, unincorporated communities that are locally recognized and identified by name. The Bar Harbor CDP consists of the main downtown center of the town of Bar Harbor. The number of residents in Bar Harbor continues to increase, but the number of residents in the CDP decreased.

The percentage of owner-occupied units increased over the last five years from 43% of units to 47% of units. Unlike the Town of Bar Harbor, the CDP has more renters than owners.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Bar Harbor has a robust tourism economy, an active Downtown that benefits from tourists visiting Acadia National Park and Mount Desert Island, as well as a year-round economy anchored by a number of key institutions and other businesses. Economic development efforts are directly linked to availability of housing, transportation options, and capacity of public infrastructure.



The employment base across industry sectors in Bar Harbor is centered on five primary sectors. These include: professional, scientific, and technical services; accommodations and food services; health care and social assistance; retail; and educational services. In 2020, Bar Harbor's businesses employed an estimated 4,846 people of which nearly half were employed in those first four industry sectors.

Prior to the pandemic, the number of jobs in Bar Harbor was steadily increasing, reaching a five-year high of 5,619 jobs in 2019. The majority of jobs in Bar Harbor fall within the professional and technical services, health care, retail, accommodations and food service, and education sectors of the economy.

The pandemic had a major impact on jobs in 2020 with the retail and accommodations and food services sectors losing approximately 600 jobs.

Some of those jobs have come back as tourism and businesses opened back up in 2021. The unemployment rate in Bar Harbor increased to 6.3% in 2020 as a result of the pandemic's impacts on jobs across tourism-based sectors. That has since fallen to 5.5% in 2021 and is likely to continue to fall as more businesses reopen and rehire. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate was at a low of 3.6%.

The seasonality of Bar Harbor's economy creates challenges related to finding and retaining employees and has created a reliance on the H-2B visa program to fill many seasonal job openings each year. During peak season months of July and August, there can be as many as 700-800 additional employees in town compared to January and February.

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The seasonality of Bar Harbor's



TRANSPORTATION

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Transportation issues in Bar Harbor are complex. There are a diverse range of transportation users, from residents, to tourists, to employees, that require a safe, convenient, accessible, and efficient transportation network that supports multiple modes of getting around town, including by car, bike, foot, bus, and boat. To achieve this, a coordinated strategy that alleviates existing transportation inefficiencies, especially congestion, will be required.



Visitation levels to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park have been increasing and are projected to continue increasing in the foreseeable future. In 2021, a total of 4 million visits to Acadia National Park were estimated by the National Park Service, resulting in the highest-ever yearly total of estimated visits to Acadia National Park. The seasonal influx of people, particularly in Bar Harbor's downtown, creates significant vehicle and pedestrian congestion issues, traffic safety concerns at downtown intersections, and puts pressure on the capacity of the town's public infrastructure.

The downtown's narrow roadway network and poor sight lines from parked vehicles create safety issues for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. As traffic congestion persists on the major roads in the downtown, more vehicles seek alternative routes through adjacent neighborhoods, impacting residents.

Cruise ship traffic contributes to congestion in the downtown area and has been steadily increasing in recent years. However, cruise ship traffic does provide economic benefit to the town and its businesses. This makes this issue complex. After halting cruise ship service during the COVID-19 pandemic, cruise ships will be porting at Bar Harbor again in 2022. Many residents would like to see limits on cruise ship visitation, while others do not.

The CAT Ferry is resuming its service to the island in 2022 and will dock along the north side of the ferry terminal pier. The town is currently exploring options for demolishing portions of the old pier and eventually replacing it with a new marina. A municipal parking lot is also being considered for this area to encourage use of public transportation.

The town has made improvements to its parking program which includes parking meters, kiosks, and permit parking options, however parking issues still persist. Parking issues still exist due to the increase in parking demand with higher visitation levels, and on-street parking on both sides of narrow roadways create safety and sightline issues. Parking fee revenue from the parking program goes directly to projects that improve the transportation system and alleviate issues such as congestion.

According to town staff, there is a need for a more robust pedestrian and bicycle network in town.

Although Bar Harbor does have some pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, including sidewalks, shoulders, and off-road paths, there is a need for comprehensive town-wide planning for a better connected bicycle and pedestrian network that links key destinations and locations and provides safe, convenient, and accessible biking and walking infrastructure throughout town.

Island Explorer ridership has been increasing in the last five years and year-round bus service is anticipated to increase in upcoming years due to high projected visitation numbers, Acadia National Park's auto-reservation program, and the ferry terminal project. Expansion of bus services, including additional buses, routes, and drivers, is a priority of Downeast Transportation Inc. in the future. This expansion will require the town's collaboration and participation from other partners.

Transportation infrastructure investment should be prioritized town-wide.

While the town is responsible for maintaining all town-owned roads throughout the community, the downtown area is often the focus for infrastructure upgrade projects, even though there is a need for more improvements town-wide.

There are a number of high use public areas in town that are expected to be impacted by sea level rise and flooding including Hadley Beach Lane, Crooked Road, and Park Loop Road. Vulnerable areas include Sand Beach, Halls Cove, Hadley Point, the piers and shore along downtown, and the bridge to the mainland and roadways leading to the bridge (Routes 3 and 102).

Bar Harbor is actively planning to curb its greenhouse gas emissions and contribution to climate change through investing in a sustainable transportation system.


Sustainable transportation priorities identified in the 2021 Climate Action Plan include supporting the development of electric, active, and public transportation systems across the community.



PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Bar Harbor's municipal facilities, such as Town Hall, the Public Works Department, the Fire Department, and its school system, and public infrastructure, including water, sewer, and other utilities, provide essential services to its residents. As a community changes over time, it is crucial to examine the quality and adequacy of the town's public facilities and services to meet the needs of current and future residents over time. Stewardship of community resources, such as its public water supply, is also critical as the town considers its future.



Bar Harbor's facilities and services, and the demand placed on them, are much more extensive than that of a town of 5,000 residents on the coast of Maine. Given this fact, there is concern that the 2035 Comprehensive Plan may call for extending infrastructure service areas or increasing infrastructure capacity that will likely create additional demand that cannot be met by the existing infrastructure or staffing.

Major investment is needed on Bar Harbor's municipal infrastructure. This includes a recent bond for updating the wastewater collection system, stormwater, and water systems. However, this will not address all capacity limitations or future demands. Approximately 5% of Bar Harbor's population is served by sewer infrastructure and 16% of the town is served by water infrastructure.

Attracting and maintaining municipal staff is a challenge for several external reasons. Affordable housing options within Bar Harbor and on Mount Desert Island present the biggest challenge for the municipality and other employers.

Protection of the Eagle Lake watershed is important to ensure this drinking water source retains its Filtration Avoidance status with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Should this waiver ever be rescinded, the Town of Bar Harbor would face the need to locate, design, construct and operate a filtration system. This would be extremely expensive and should be avoided at all cost.

The Conners Emerson School buildings have been identified as being in need of **major infrastructure investments**.

There is a desire by some decision makers to coordinate this facility planning with this comprehensive planning process as it is directly related to other community issues.

Bar Harbor's school facilities require investment and upgrades to address space needs. The Bar Harbor School Committee is currently using the approved bond to hire an architect for the design and budgeting for a proposed demolition of the Conners School and the potential renovation and addition to the Emerson building so that it may serve as the new school.

Prioritizing and planning for other major infrastructure investments is a need identified by the Town Council and Municipal Staff. This will require data collection and management. The implementation of an asset management program for municipal facilities and infrastructure would help anticipate and plan for needed maintenance and investment.

Park and recreation related duties now constitute a major portion of the Highway Department's work. Addressing this through the hiring of additional staff or through the creation of a Parks and Recreation Department would free up the Highway Department to focus on other duties and projects.

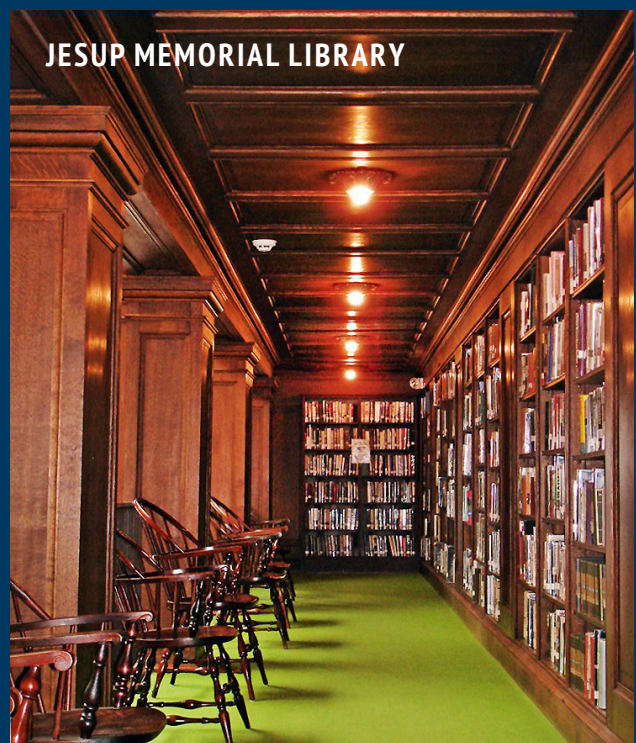
The Municipal Office building has been renovated and has room for expansion if needed. A renovation of the second-floor auditorium is still pending, and the hiring of a sustainability coordinator is planned for 2022.

An upcoming study commissioned by the Police Department is expected to address the employment structure and a location for a shared police station with the Town of Mount Desert.

Leasing of a municipal fiber network connecting all municipal facilities is currently underway.

The pier and other waterfront access points, such as the Ferry Terminal, need evaluation and investment, and the mooring field needs realignment to gain more space, add moorings, and accommodate larger fishing vessels. Both projects should be coordinated and planned for in the Capital Improvement Plan.

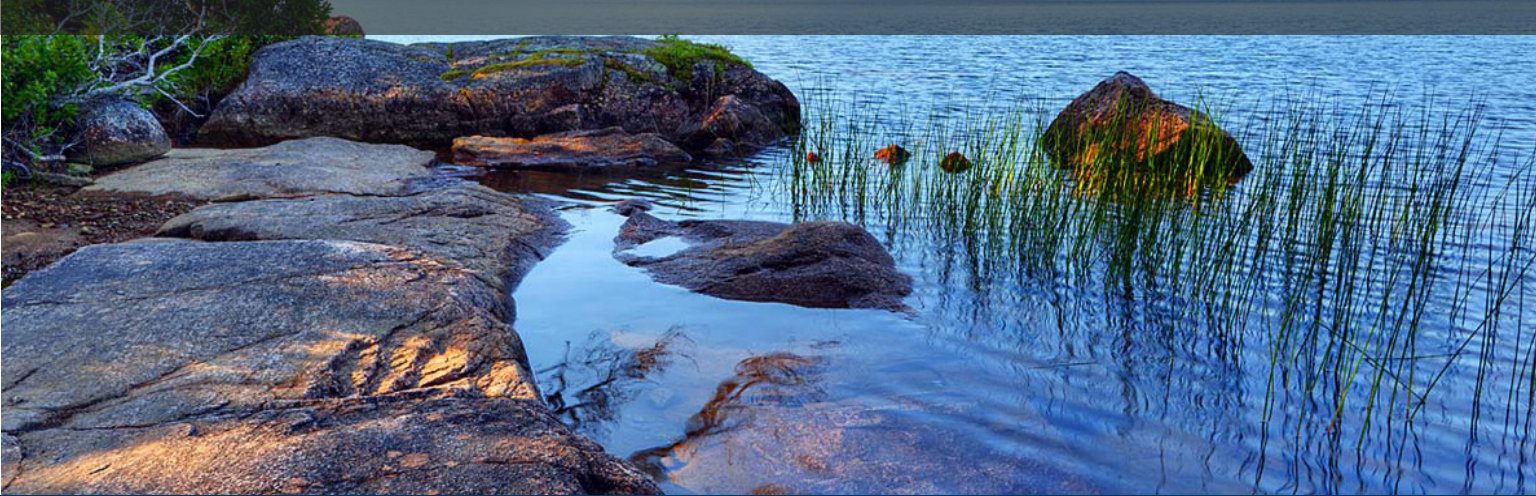
In 2021, over 4,800 patrons held library cards at the Jesup Memorial Library. The Jesup Memorial Library has been working to raise funds for the renovation and expansion of this historic 1911 building.



NATURAL RESOURCES

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Bar Harbor's natural environment is home to diverse species of plants and wildlife. It provides clean water, clean air, and carbon storage capacity (through the presence of vegetation) that mitigates the impacts of climate change. Many community members who live in Bar Harbor are attracted to the beautiful landscapes, scenic views, and plentiful opportunities to be in nature.



Bar Harbor has significant freshwater resources with outstanding water quality. There are no impaired waterbodies in the town, and only Eagle Lake is listed as threatened on the Maine National Park Service Priority List because it has outstanding water quality and is used as the primary public water source.

The Northeast Creek watershed encompasses a large portion of the town and drains numerous freshwater tributaries. Modeling of nutrient loading and corresponding habitat degradation have been incorporated into town land use planning but needs updating.

Prime agricultural soils in Bar Harbor are limited to 4% of the total land area (1,024 acres). An additional 6% of Bar

Harbor is considered farmland soils of statewide importance (1,652 acres). Only 8% (80 acres) of Prime farmland soils in Bar Harbor are currently conserved. 37% of soils of statewide importance are conserved.

There has been an 83% decline in the total acreage of active farms in Bar Harbor between 1940 and 2013. Working farmlands face numerous constraints, including limited land area and high land value.

Significant Wildlife Habitat in Bar Harbor is extensive, particularly Deer Wintering Areas, Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat, and Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat. The island's native plant and animal communities have the potential to be impacted by climate change through changes in temperature and precipitation.

There are two identified focus areas of statewide ecological significance in Bar Harbor, including Acadia East and the Taunton Bay Focus Area. These areas support rare plants, animals, and natural communities, and are indicative of the noteworthy outstanding natural resources and habitat that Bar Harbor provides.

There are several species of wildlife within Bar Harbor that have statewide protections due to low populations or limited habitat.

Bar Harbor is home to one endangered species (Peregrine Falcon), one threatened species (Harlequin Duck), two species of special concern (Great Blue Heron and Carolina Saddlebags), and one species of conservation need (Purple Sandpiper).

Acadia National Park is a critical undeveloped habitat block, holding 68% of the connected habitat within Bar Harbor.

Bar Harbor faces threats from climate change, sea level rise and storm surges. Because of its relatively high relief along the coastline, Bar Harbor has some natural resiliency to sea level rise. However, significant threats have been identified, most notably the vulnerabilities of the mainland bridge.

Commercially harvested marine resources are an important part of Bar Harbor’s economy, representing a total of \$49,035,622 in total value between 2012 and 2020 across eight species. While shellfishing is allowed in the majority of Frenchman Bay, the critical mudflat habitat directly around Bar Harbor’s coastline is prohibited for harvesting.

Table 5.8: Ten largest conserved land parcels within Bar Harbor	
Conserved Land Parcel	Approximate Area within Bar Harbor (acres)
Acadia National Park	13,290
Kitteredge Brook Forest (including Addition)	524
Stone Barn Farm	134
Indian Point-Blagden Preserve	102
Blue Horizons	85
Acadian Ridge	81
Acadian Woods I	79
Youngs Mountain	69
Fogg Farm	68
Thomas Island	66

Water quality monitoring suggests good water quality in the bay overall.

The Town of Bar Harbor has a relationship with the MDI Water Quality Coalition and the MDI Bio Lab to monitor water quality in the bay.

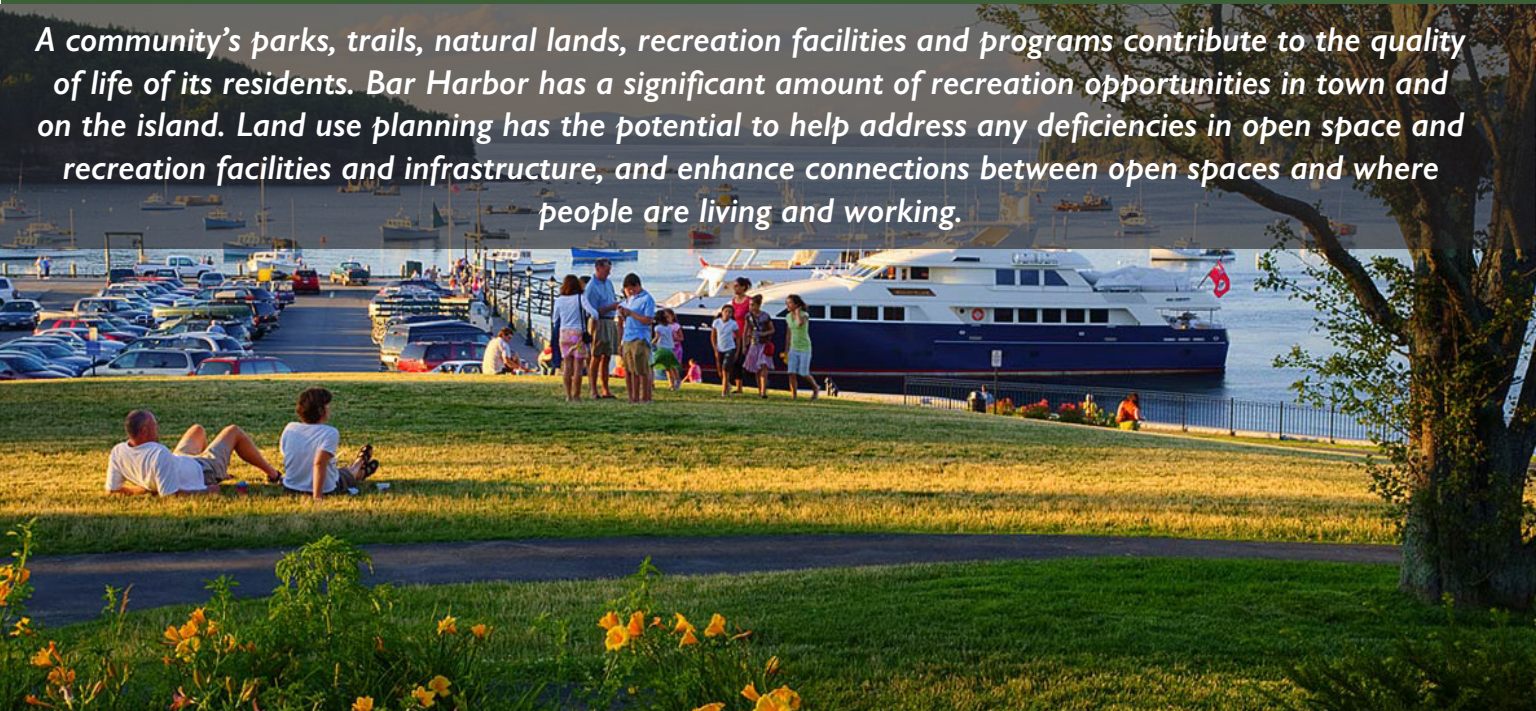
The town has a recently formed Climate Emergency Task Force.

The Comprehensive Plan should support the initiatives and strategies outlined by this task force in their recent Climate Action Plan and 2022 Updates (in draft form).

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

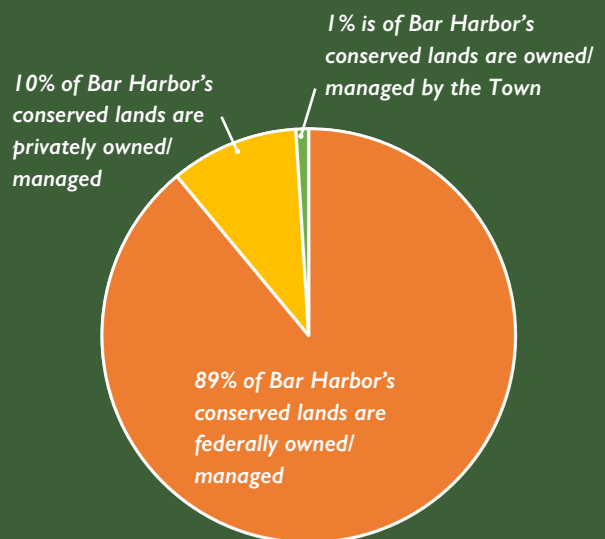
BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

A community's parks, trails, natural lands, recreation facilities and programs contribute to the quality of life of its residents. Bar Harbor has a significant amount of recreation opportunities in town and on the island. Land use planning has the potential to help address any deficiencies in open space and recreation facilities and infrastructure, and enhance connections between open spaces and where people are living and working.



More than 50% of Bar Harbor 's land area is conserved. The total acreage of conserved lands in town is 15,005 acres. Bar Harbor has a high degree of conservation partners across scales and jurisdictions. While it poses challenges, this should be viewed as a victory.

The multi-jurisdictional nature and physical landscape of open spaces in Bar Harbor provides a tremendous array of recreational opportunities including forested walks/hikes, fresh and saltwater boating, passive playgrounds and picnic areas, cross-country skiing, intertidal shellfish harvesting. While there are biking opportunities, they are not as easily or safely available given the narrow road network and limited bike paths outside of the park.



The downtown municipal parks and open spaces receive a high degree of use from residents and visitors. While these assets are serving a high demand, this puts pressure on limited resources in Bar Harbor – space and municipal staff capacity.

Bar Harbor has many public water access points and offers an array of recreational opportunities. Through a series of management agreements, knowledge of these areas ranges from widely known to rarely used.

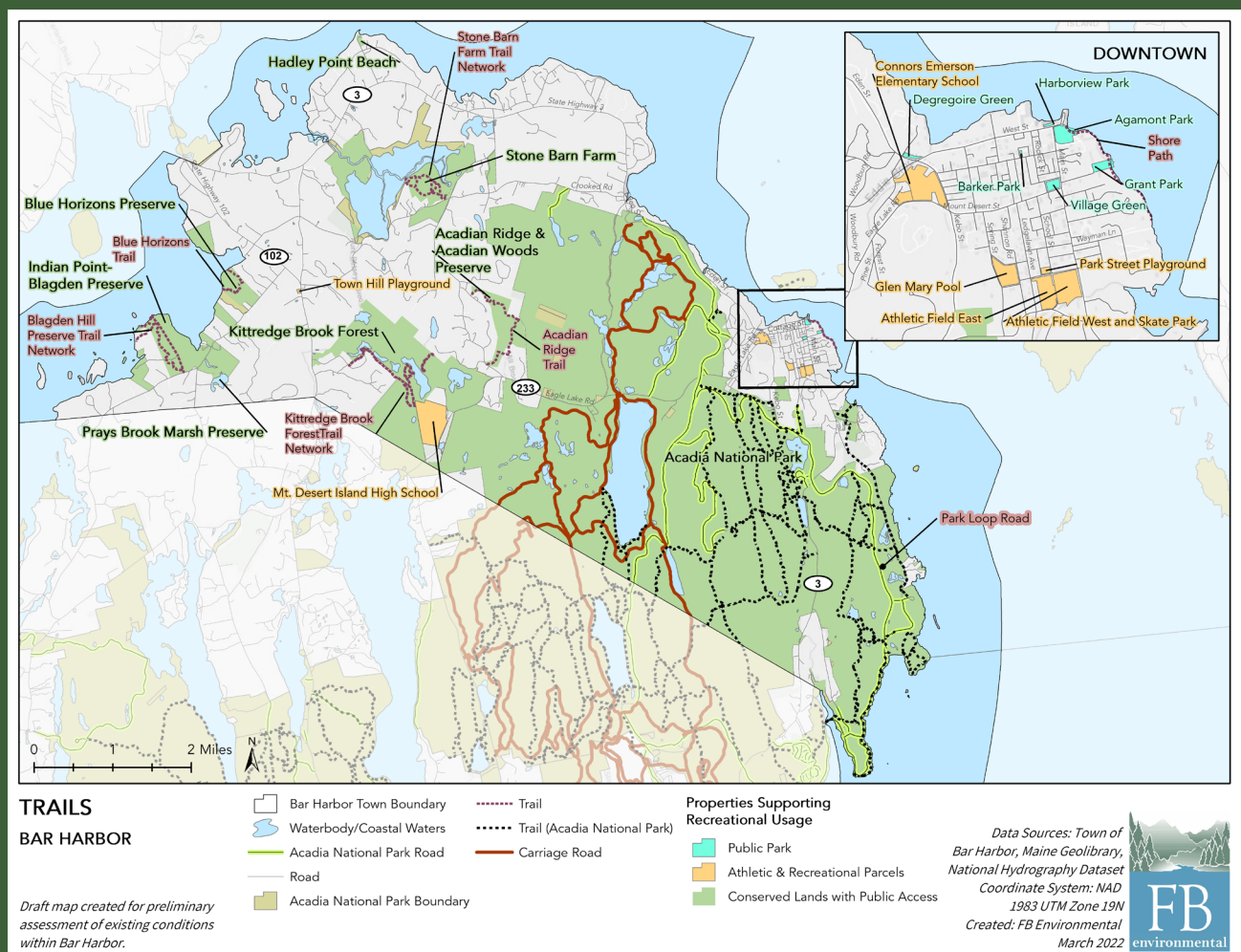
There is a heavy reliance on nonprofits for recreational programs in Bar Harbor considering there is no municipal department providing this type of programming. With that said, the programs offered by these private, nonprofits appear to serve the needs across age groups.

There are many recreational opportunities available for seniors. However, one area of improvement related to senior recreation is the need for improved communication outlets.

The dense downtown of Bar Harbor is frequently used for walking/running and bicycling, although safer alternatives may be available to better integrate these modes of recreation into the streetscape.

Many of the open spaces in areas beyond the downtown offer recreational opportunities for locals that are less frequented by visitors. However, the overall usage of these areas is increasing.

There are limited recreational connections between neighborhoods and open spaces throughout Bar Harbor. Currently, these are viewed as independent areas instead of a cohesive recreational network.



HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Bar Harbor's historic, archaeological, and cultural resources are plentiful, reflecting a legacy of natural resource stewardship, a historic tourism industry, a legacy of waterfront living, and a strong coastal community character. Preserving and capitalizing on these unique resources will contribute to the Town's community development and enhancement efforts.



The Town of Bar Harbor has a rich and unique history as seen in its coastal location, architecture, working waterfront, Wabanaki heritage, Acadia National Park, and tourism legacy.

This unique history can be seen throughout the town in its historic resources including buildings, carriage roads, bridges, shipwrecks, shell middens, quarries, camps, and more.

Acadia National Park's natural and cultural history are an important part of Bar Harbor's past, present, and future.

Many of Bar Harbor's historic resources and historically significant sites are in the park's boundaries.

Bar Harbor has 22 properties and route historic districts that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This properties and neighborhoods add to the character, sense of place, and identity of the community.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has inventoried and identified 15 significant prehistoric archaeological sites in Bar Harbor.

According to the inventory "most or all are shell middens located in the shoreland zone." These sites are threatened by human impacts from development, amateur digging, and natural forces such as sea level rise and storm erosion.

Nine properties on the National Register of Historic Places are at risk for being impacted by sea level rise. This is according to future sea level rise scenarios projected by the State of Maine.

To date, 92 historic archaeological sites have been documented for the Town of Bar Harbor. Many of these sites consist of shipwrecks. Others include sawmills, camps, farmsteads, cemeteries, and quarries. Future archaeological surveys should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage.

Bar Harbor has several examples of unique adaptive reuse projects that includes the contemporary reuse of historic structures and properties, while also maintaining their historic integrity (such as the La Rochelle mansion, Stone Farm, etc.)

The night skies of Bar Harbor are known for having the largest expanse of naturally dark sky east of the Mississippi River. The town has taken steps to regulating lighting and the illuminating of signs to preserve its dark skies.

Bar Harbor's Design Review Overlay District was established to create a clean process for proposed changes to historically important structures within this area of the downtown. Projects must comply with these standards to preserve a visually harmonious environment within the overlay district and to protect and enhance the historic character of the villages in Bar Harbor.

Bar Harbor has an extensive network of organizations and partners in the town and the greater Mount Desert Island that work to protect, promote, and educate the public about the island's history and cultural resources.

There is a movement to restore the naming of key historic, cultural, and natural features with colonial names back to their original indigenous names. There may be opportunity to work with the Abbe Museum on future projects to accomplish this at specific locations in Bar Harbor.



LAND USE

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Land use refers to how land is being used in a community and the location, distribution, and character of those uses. Land use has a direct relationship with transportation, natural and cultural resources, infrastructure, and housing. Land use changes, over time, have the potential to impact how walkable, livable, resilience, and vibrant a community is.



Over half of the land area in Bar Harbor is conserved. This removes a large area of the town from potentially developable land. This high percentage of conserved lands is an important part of Bar Harbor's character, and is an asset and challenge at the same time.

29% of Bar Harbor is developed land, 15% is undeveloped land, and the remaining area is permanently conserved. Much of the town's development is concentrated in the downtown area, however lower density residential occurs throughout town.

Townwide, only 2% of the developed parcels acreage are actually covered by building footprints. This may indicate opportunities for infill development and higher density in some areas.

Aside from land used for Acadia National Park, the most prevalent land use in Bar Harbor is residential.

Vacant land specifically has fallen by approximately 33% since the 2007 comprehensive plan.

This indicates that there is an increasingly smaller amount of land that could be developed in town. The neighborhood with the greatest percent of decreased vacant land acreage is the Emery District, followed by the Town Hill neighborhood. The areas of Bar Harbor that were previously vacant land in 2007 and are no longer vacant land use have primarily been converted to residential land use followed by conservation and education uses.

Of the developed and undeveloped parcels within the town (excluding conserved lands), approximately half are impacted by environmental constraints. This includes wetlands, waterbodies, tributaries, buffers around these features, hydric soils, and steep slopes.

The most prevalent land cover in Bar Harbor is forested land at 66%.

This is correlated with the high amount of conserved land in town. Developed land covers approximately 9% of the land surface in Bar Harbor.

Bar Harbor has 40 unique zoning districts.

Over half of these zones are very small, or less than 1% each of the Town land area (less than approximately 250 acres).

The Town of Bar Harbor can be divided into 11 neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods include the Downtown, Schooner Head, Otter Creek, the Emery District, Hulls Cove, Indian Point, Ireson Hill, McFarland Hill, Salisbury Cove, Town Hill, and Acadia National Park.

The coastal neighborhoods – such as Downtown, Schooner Head, and Ireson Hill, and Otter Creek have the highest average assessed land value per acre as compared to all neighborhoods.

The Downtown neighborhood has the single highest total land value at approximately \$517 million, and also has the highest assessed land value per acre at approximately \$366 thousand per acre.

Land use regulations that encourage walkable neighborhoods and downtown streets to promote sustainability and reduce traffic congestion have been identified as an important land use element that could be improved in Bar Harbor

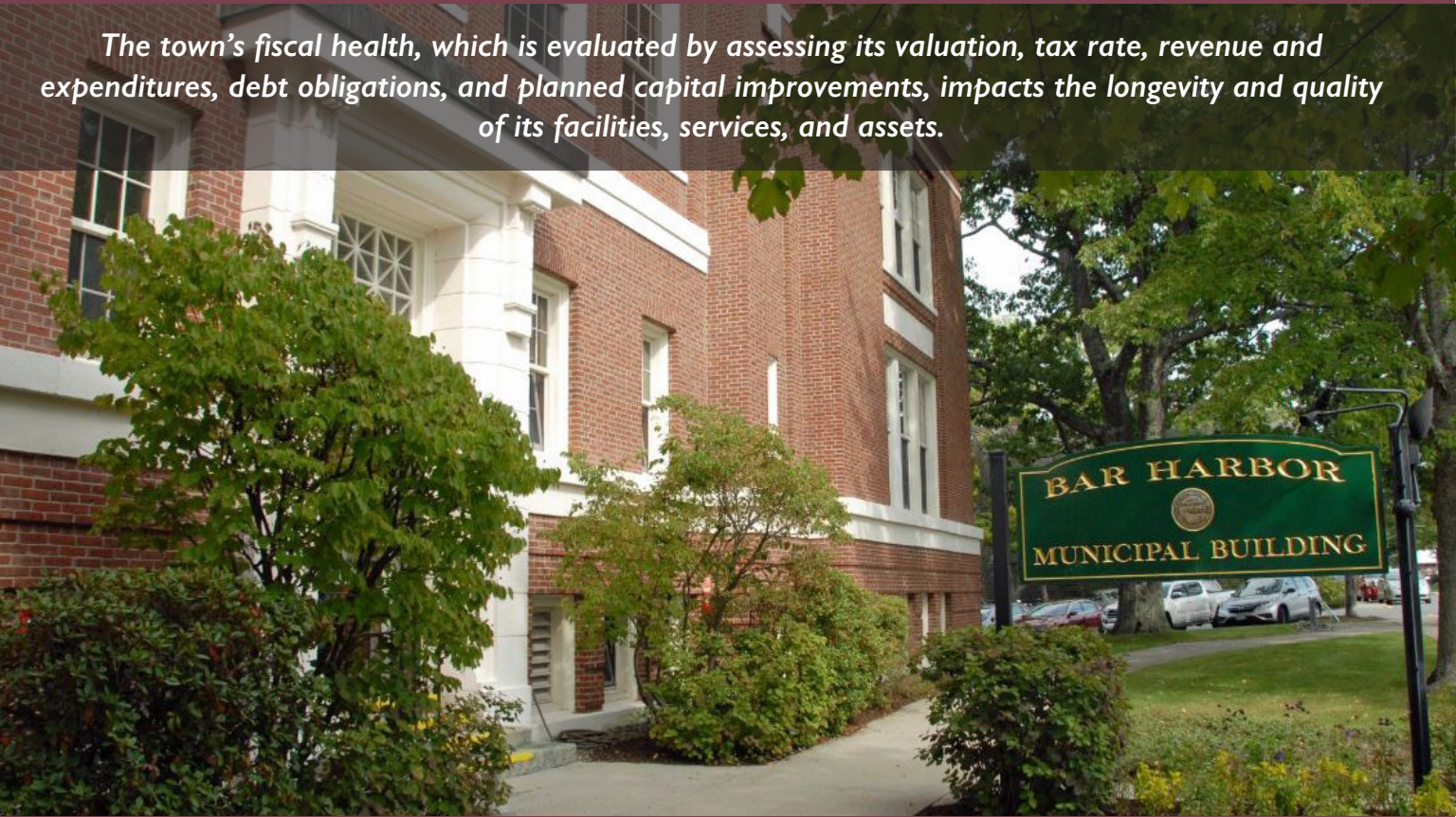
Agriculture has been identified as an important natural resource to protect by the town and faces major constraints of high land value and limited land area available for agriculture in Bar Harbor.

The town owns very little municipal land at approximately 149 acres.

FISCAL CAPACITY

BAR HARBOR 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

The town's fiscal health, which is evaluated by assessing its valuation, tax rate, revenue and expenditures, debt obligations, and planned capital improvements, impacts the longevity and quality of its facilities, services, and assets.



Bar Harbor's local property valuation increased to a high of \$1.93 billion in FY 2022 which was a 27% increase in one fiscal year.

Bar Harbor was able to reduce the tax rate from \$11.90 in FY 2021 to \$9.74 in FY 2022 due to the large increase in property valuations.

Although the tax rate has fallen, the property tax bill for a house valued at the town's current median increased by about \$800 a year.

Property taxes comprise about 84% of the town's total revenue stream and the top ten taxpayers in the town cover close to 10% of that tax levy. Most of those taxpayers are in the hospitality industry.

Expenditures continue to rise in Bar Harbor, particularly with the additional tax revenue being generated by the increase in property valuation.

The town maintains a robust Capital Improvement Plan document which is updated annually and covers a five-year period. This document guides municipal investments in the community.